

Strategic Communications and the Public Debate about Health Disparities

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In collaboration with the
FrameWorks Institute

The Work We Undertake

Methods

- Open-ended interviews
- Ethnographic studies
- Focus groups
- Media effects experiments
- Media content analysis
- Survey research

2004 –2005 Issues

- Health care (St. Luke's, TCWF, TCE, HNHF)
- Race (JEHT, Mott, AECF, Ford, Kellogg)
- Rural issues (Kellogg)
- Government (CEG, Demos)
- ECD and Adolescence (McKnight, AECF, MacArthur/NSCDC)
- Work (Lifetrack/Joyce)
- Environment (TOC, McCune)

How We Approach A Problem

- What is the difference between the way the public understands a problem and the way experts do?
- What are the likely consequences of that difference on support for policies?
- Are there common ways of thinking about the problem that seem natural, almost automatic (i.e., dominant frames)?
- What are the sources of that difference – Media? Values? Misdirected storytelling by advocates?
- How can the problem be reframed so that different policy solutions are illuminated and become “good to think”?

Strategic Frame Analysis

- It examines the elements of the frame and how they contribute to public understanding of a social issue.
- It is analytic in that it deconstructs dominant frames currently operating in public discourse and studies their impact on public opinion.
- It is strategic in that it identifies and tests alternative frames that could better support public policies, and enumerates their elements.

Strategic Frame Analysis

- Is theory based but delivers practical, prescriptive outcomes
- Combines communications scholars and practitioners
- Is multi-method and multi-disciplinary
- Draws from the social and cognitive sciences
- Verifies its findings with empirical research
- Pioneers new methods across its issue laboratories: environment, children and youth, foreign policy, leadership, gender and race, crime and violence.

What Is A Frame?

"The way a story is told – its selective use of particular values, symbols, metaphors, and messengers – which, in turn, triggers the shared and durable cultural models that people use to make sense of their world."

FrameWorks Institute

Why Framing Matters

- “the way in which the world is imagined determines at any particular moment what men will do” (Lippmann, 1925: 14)
- “frames are conceptual tools which media and individuals rely on to convey, interpret, and evaluate information” (Neuman, Just, and Crigler, 1992: 149)
- “the manner in which a problem of choice is “framed” is a contextual cue that may profoundly influence decision outcomes” (Iyengar, 1991: 21)

Why Framing Matters

“Movements are engaged in ‘meaning-work’ ...the struggle over the production of ideas of meaning...The failure of mass mobilization when structural conditions seem otherwise ripe may be accounted for by the absence of a resonant master frame.” Snow and Benford

Episodic v. Thematic Frames

EPIODIC FRAMES

- Individuals
- Events
- Psychological
- Private
- Appeal to consumers
- Better information
- Fix the person

THEMATIC FRAMES

- Issues
- Trends
- Political/enviromntl
- Public
- Appeal to citizens
- Better Policies
- Fix the Condition

The Power of Frames

- Tell us what this communications is ABOUT
- Signal what counts, what can be ignored
- “Fill in” or infer missing information
- Assign responsibility
- Set up a pattern of reasoning
- Influence decision outcomes

Table 4

The Race, Crime, and TV News Experiment
Recall of Suspect by Experimental Condition

	<u>Black Suspect</u>	<u>No Suspect</u>	<u>White Suspect</u>
Percent recalling	70	44	10
suspect as black	(182)	(56)	(21)
Percent recalling	13	19	64
suspect as white	(34)	(24)	(137)
Percent unable to	17	37	26
recall suspect	(45)	(46)	(56)

Communications Is Storytelling

- "Finding some familiar element causes us to activate the story that is labeled by that familiar element, and we understand the new story as if it were an exemplar of that old element."
- "Understanding means finding a story you already know and saying, 'Oh yeah, that one.'"
- "Once we have found (the) story, we stop processing."

Roger Schank

Frames Influence Decisions

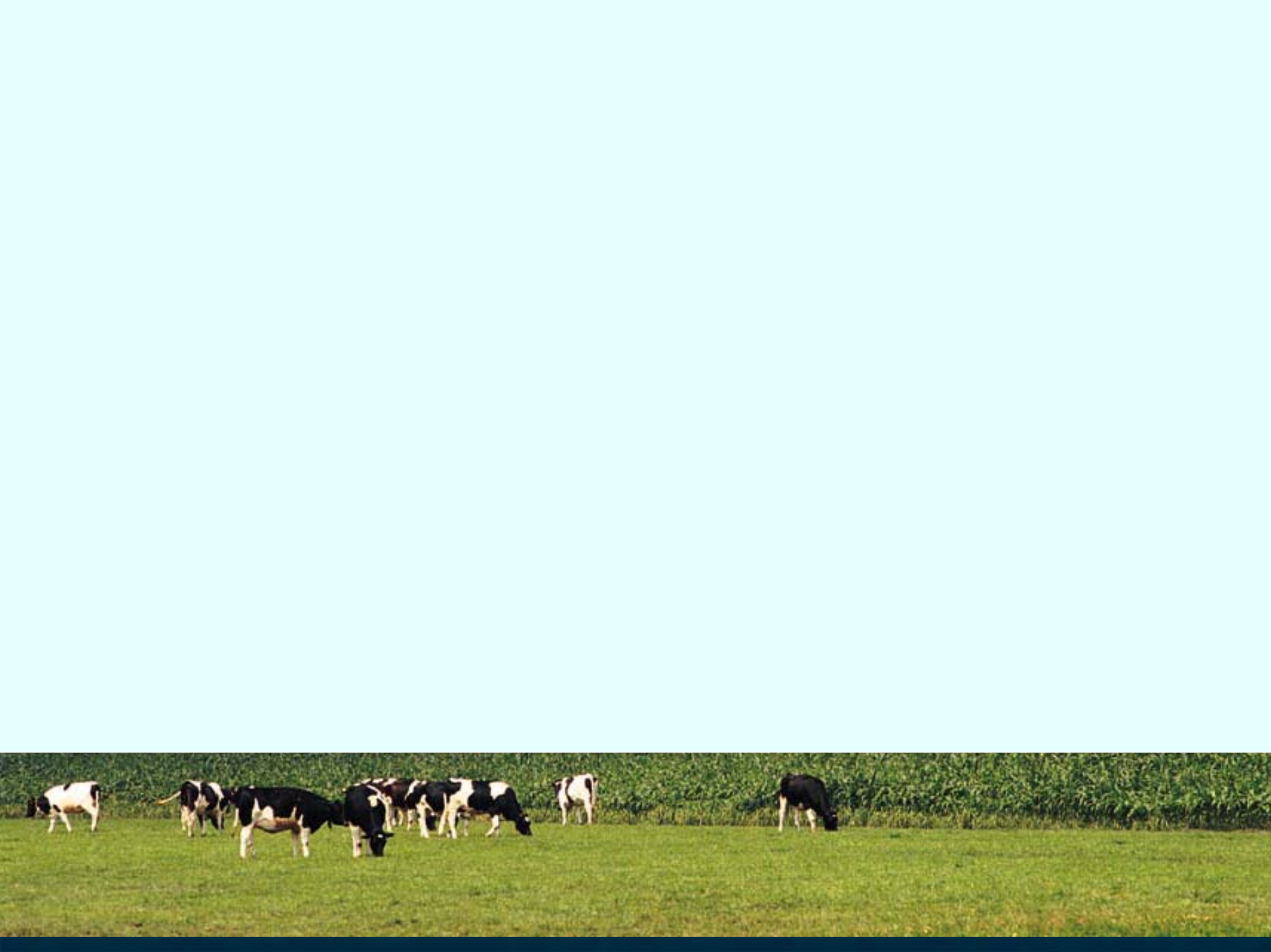
“Every frame

- Defines the issue,
- Explains who is responsible,
- And suggests potential solutions.

All of this is conveyed by

- Images,
- Stereotypes, or
- Anecdotes.”

Charlotte Ryan, Prime Time Activism, Boston: South End Press, 1991





What Research Suggests About How People Process Information

--People are not blank slates

- People use mental shortcuts to make sense of the world
- Incoming information provides cues that connect to the pictures in our heads
- People get most information about public affairs from the news media, which creates a framework of expectation, or **dominant frame**
- Over time, we develop habits of thought and expectation and configure incoming information to conform to this frame

Reasoning is Frame-Based Not Fact Based

Case of the "Good Teens":

Six focus groups were confronted with a "Good News" story that presented positive statistics about youth. Here's how adults got rid of the facts:

- They ignored the positive and focused on the negative.
- They said the numbers weren't correct or were biased.
- They said the numbers weren't good enough.

Levels of Thinking

- Ideas and issues come in hierarchies
- These hierarchies track and direct our thinking
- Higher-level frames act as primes for lower-level frames
- Higher-level frames map their values and reasoning onto the lower-level frames

People Need Values Cues

- Level One: Big ideas, like justice, prevention, family, equality and opportunity
- Level Two: Issue-types, like women's rights, the environment, children's issues, work
- Level Three: Specific issues, like treatment of women by the Taliban, rainforests, daycare, minimum wage

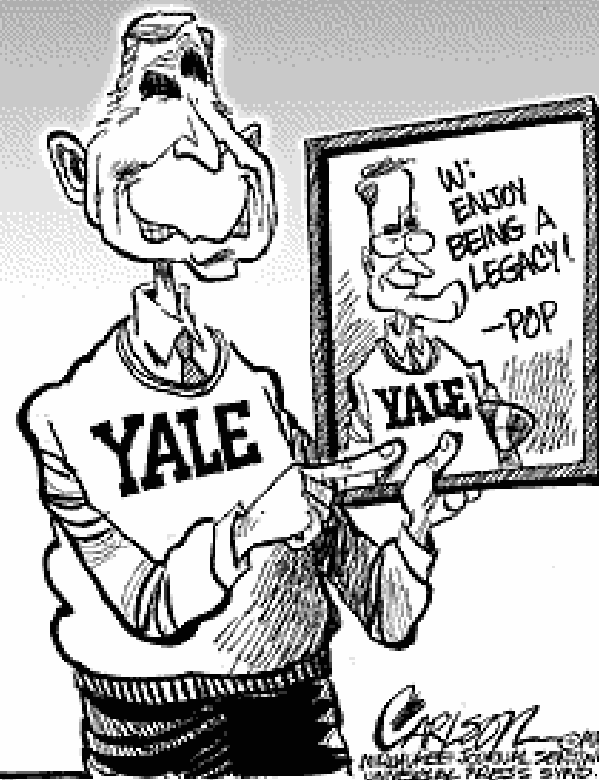
CARLSON
MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYND.



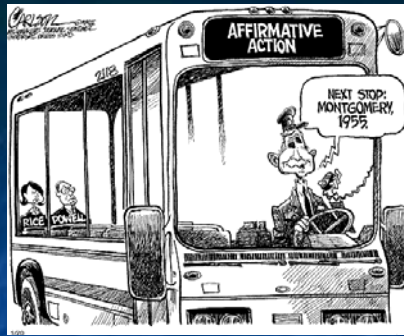
UNFAIR
RACIAL PREFERENCE



FAIR
OBJECTIVE STANDARD



CARLSON
NIGHTLIFE JOURNAL ZEPHYRUS
UNIVERSITY PRESS SYDNEY



1

Progress

Fairness



2

Race

Class



3

Affirmative
Action

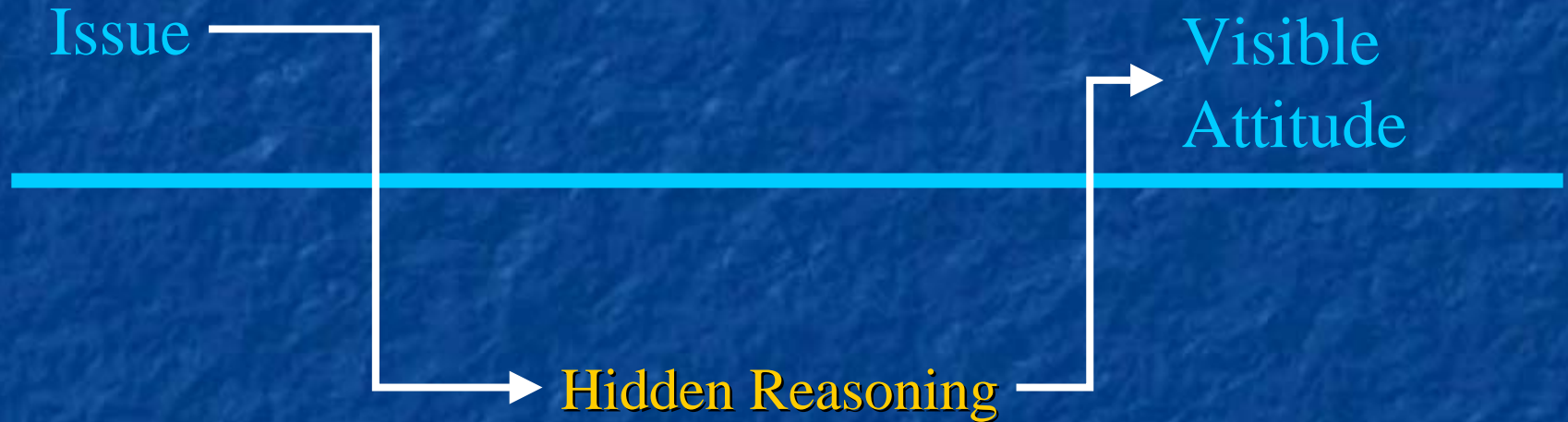
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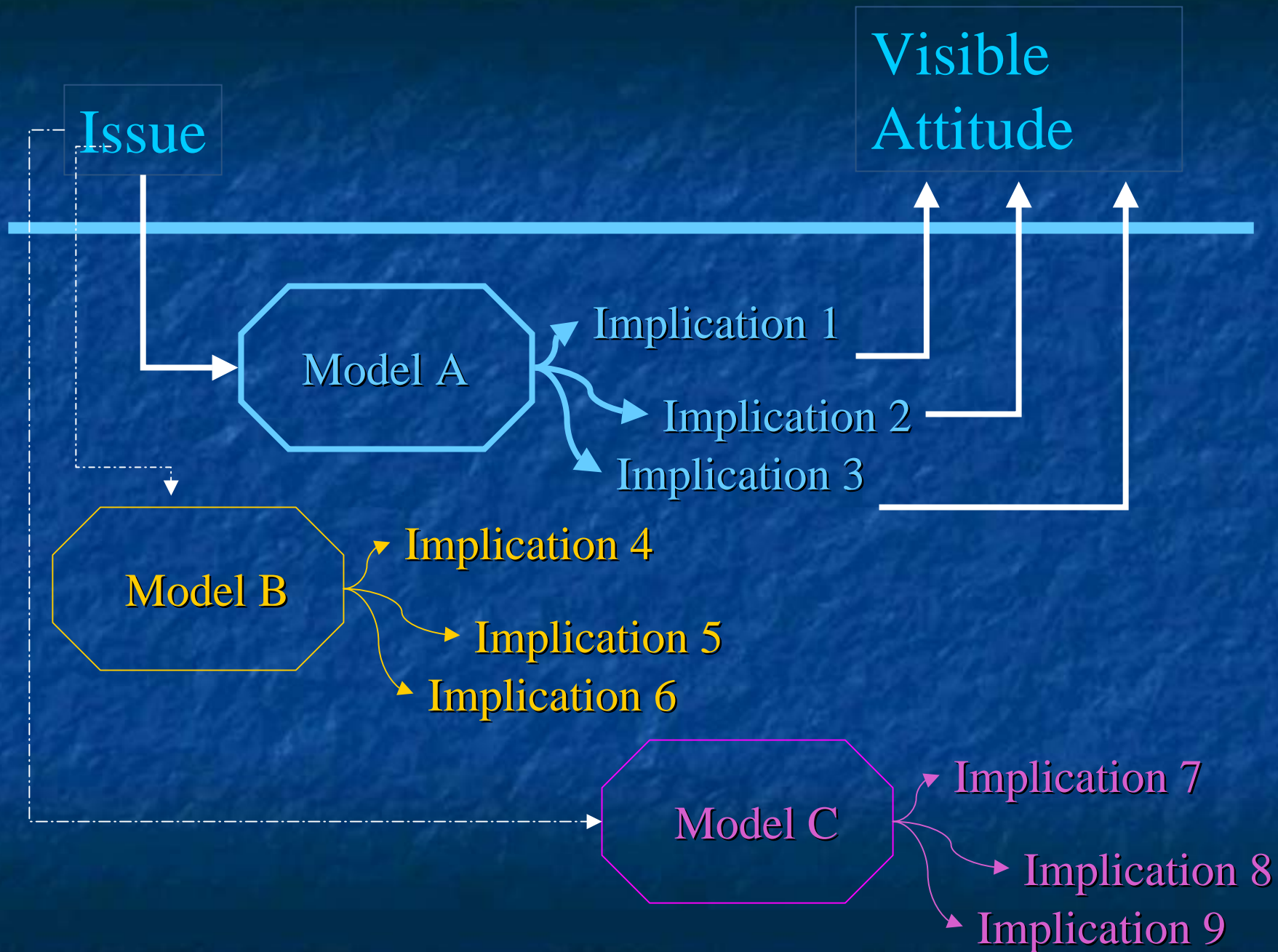
"People approach the world not as naïve, blank-slate receptacles who take in stimuli ...in some independent and objective way, but rather as experienced and sophisticated *veterans of perception* who have stored their prior experiences as an organized mass.

This prior experience then takes the form of expectations about the world, and in the vast majority of cases, the world, being a systematic place, confirms these expectations, saving the individual the trouble of figuring things out anew all the time."

Deborah Tannen

The Cognitive Perspective





Reversing Framing Effects

WHAT IS REFRAMING?

“When a movement wishes to put forward a radically new set of ideas, it must engage in frame transformation: new values may have to be planted and nurtured, old meanings or understandings jettisoned, and erroneous beliefs or ‘misframings’ reframed.”

Tarrow, Snow and Benford

Juries Consider Tobacco Awards

Smoking As Vice Frame

Bad behavior (teens')

Individualism

Freedom/choice

Harmless experimentation

Responsibility of parents

Vital industry

Protection (Just say no)

Science isn't in

Smoking As Product Frame

Bad behavior(companies')

Manipulation

Defective product

Drug addiction

Responsibility of govt

Deviant industry

Protection (kids/advtg)

Scientific consensus

Rethinking Communications

- When communications is inadequate, people default to the “pictures in their heads”
- When communications is effective, people can see an issue from a different perspective

Framing and Reframing Health Disparities

Setting the Dominant Frame

- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Media content analysis

Health Disparities: A Tough Sell

"Whether it's Latinos or Caucasians, African-Americans, anything you think of, it's not good quality healthcare,"
(non-college-educated white man, NM)

"I don't think it is just minority communities that are uninsured. What about the elderly people that are uninsured and spending all this money on prescription coverage and assisted living costs and different things?"
(white man, NJ)

"I know plenty of white folks or Asian, Latino who go through the same b.s. that my grandmother is going through right now."
(African American man, MD)

Convincing Reasons for Reforms

1-10 point scale, AZ Survey

- PLAN. "There's no one fix that will address all the problems in the health insurance system. What is important is that we put a long-term plan in place and begin to take necessary steps toward improving health care." 8.0
- PREVENTION. "Quality health insurance that includes check-ups, immunizations, well baby care, pre-natal care and other preventive care pays for itself in the long run by preventing problems before they happen or become serious. By expanding health insurance coverage, health care reform will pay for itself and result in healthier communities." 7.8
- PLACES NOT PEOPLE. "There are lots of situations that result in people being uninsured – small businesses that do not offer health insurance, insurance companies that reject coverage due to pre-existing conditions, young adults that are too old to be on their parents' coverage but cannot afford their own, early retirement, divorce...We need health care reform that means people in any of these situations no longer have to worry about health insurance " 7.5

Disparities: How Convincing?

“While there have been significant advances in public health and health care”:

Race Cues

“...the health status of communities of color continues to fall behind that of the population at large. California should move immediately to provide targeted programs to improve the health of these populations and communities, by making this a top priority in health care reform.”

6.7/10

Class Cues

“...the health status of low-income communities continues to fall behind that of the population at large. Many low-income people are without insurance. In fact, two-thirds of those without insurance are working, but their employers do not provide insurance or they do not earn enough to pay for it on their own.

7.3/10

Issue Areas in the Print and Broadcast News (N=547)

	<u># of Discussions</u>
Education	214
Brown V. Board	168
Jobs/Employment	106
Juvenile Justice	95
Health care	63

Content Analysis of Print Media, Fall 2004

Explanations of Health Care Disparities by Race

	<i>White</i>	<i>African American</i>	<i>Latino</i>	<i>Native American</i>	<i>Unspecified Minority</i>	<i>Total N %</i>
Individual Locus NEGATIVE	0%	59%	56%	33%	36%	67 50%
Individual Locus POSITIVE	0%	0%	0%	0%	7%	2 1%
Systemic Locus NEGATIVE	100%	31%	44%	67%	58%	58 44%
Systemic Locus POSITIVE	0%	10%	0%	0%	0%	6 5%
Total	100% 2	100% 58	100% 36	100% 6	100% 31	133 100%

Trends in Race-based Health Care News Reports

- For African Americans the most common individual causes cited were poor personal habits (18 mentions), an individual's lack of insurance (five), poor understanding of a disease (four), and a genetic predisposition to an illness (three).
- For Latinos poor language skills and contradictory cultural values topped the list, each with five opinions, followed by exacerbating underlying conditions (four) and a genetic predisposition to a disease (three).

Summary of Findings from the Cognitive Media Research (n=100)

- Separate Fates: The great majority of the pieces treat the fates of Minorities and Whites as discrete and disconnected
- The stories focus almost overwhelmingly on problems and disparities.
- “Little picture” understanding of problems: The presentation of problems in Minority communities promotes diminished understandings of the larger (causal) picture.
- The materials focus predominantly on the (especially problematic) experience of African-Americans.
- Oppositional framing tends to reinforce the rhetorical nature of this issue.
- Stereotypes are often reinforced by headlines, photo captions and layout.

Examples of Problems and Disparities

- Higher diabetic rates, inadequate health insurance and a rapidly growing population of older Hispanics will result in a much higher incidence of Alzheimer's disease among the nation's Hispanics, according to a compilation of studies released Tuesday by the Alzheimer's Association. (*Miami Herald* p. 9A 5/19/04)
- Miami's Jackson was the busiest of the four [health care] sites. All serve predominantly poor, uninsured Minority populations, though Jackson serves more Minorities and uninsured than average. The doctors found that about one-quarter of the ER patients had successive high blood pressure readings during their visit. (*Miami Herald* p. 1 5/25/04)

Public Thinking About Race: Findings From the Race Project

The Research Agenda

Completed

- 50 elicitations (1-on-1 interviews)
- 16 focus groups
- Policy identification – education, health, criminal justice, economic/community development
- Content analysis of national and local, print and TV media over 1 month
- Cognitive analysis of common and uncommon news stories

To Come

- Simplifying models research
- National opinion survey
- Applications and training

How Americans Think About Race

Conclusions from the Elicitations

- Believe racism is real but diminishing
- Conceive of racism as highly charged personal episodes and deliberate actions
- Strongly disapprove of racism
- See few solutions/remedies
- Because they believe racism is personal (ranging from acceptable preferences for one's own kind to unacceptable prejudice)
- See situation improving "naturally"
- Because problem is lodged in archaic beliefs and individuals
- Believe when these problematic beliefs/individuals die, success will appropriately depend on personal responsibility, effort and initiative (pluck and luck)
- Conclude that the goal is sameness, a color blind society

People Talk About Race

“I think maybe by the time our children are in positions of power, everybody will be equal, but there’s so many of the old school that are still around..” (White liberal female, RI)

“How long ago was slavery? A hundred years?. Black people are mayors, congressman, doctors, lawyers. What have they got to complain about? They’ve got the same opportunities I have. I think their only handicap is if they think, you know, ‘I’m being crapped on because I’m Black.’” (White conservative male, AL)

“My own personal belief is that, that was then and this is now. And I don’t believe because of your ethnic background that you should be allowed special funding for anything. I’m sorry.” (White liberal female, OR)

The Focus Groups

Probing Dominant Frames and Alternatives

- July 7 – Baltimore, MD -- 1 African American and 1 mixed group
- August 5 – St. Paul, MN 2 -- white groups, 1 college graduates, 1 not
- August 18 – Albuquerque, NM – 1 Latino group, 1 whites without college degree
- October 4 – suburban NJ – 1 Chinese American group, 1 white college graduates
- October 19 – San Francisco, CA – 1 Korean American group, 1 white college grads
- October 20 – Torrance, CA – 1 Latino group, 1 whites without college degree
- December 16, 2004 – Nashville, TN – 1 white group, non-college educated; 1 African American group

The Dominant Frame

The language of race discrimination that was instrumental in altering public perceptions and advancing significant civil rights reforms throughout much of the 20th Century is not effective in building support for the policies needed to address today's racial disparities.

Racism is an old debate that has already been settled.

- Some say it isn't as prevalent:
 - "There are obvious differences with the cultures here in Albuquerque. Let's not be naive about it. But I don't feel it is as fractured as it seems to be communicated by this article." (Latino man, NM)
 - "I have not felt it since second or third grade...I don't feel that I've been discriminated against." (Chinese American man, NJ)
 - "A town like Cranford where it is 99 percent white and we just appointed our first black police chief. I think we're seeing more and more of this where it's not the color of your skin. It's your ability and this man is so capable and that's why he got it...He was appointed because he was the best man for the job." (white woman, NJ)

Racism is an old debate that has already been settled.

- Others say it is illegal, so the problem is being addressed:
 - "You can't go ahead and deny one person a job and then turn around and give it to the other person just because he is a different race. You may get yourself sued. So a lot of it is legislated. I still think there is a lot of prejudice. You look around in the room right here. We have a pretty good ideas that we don't like black people too much and you don't trust them, and they're not all that way." (white man, MN)

Racism is real, but cuts both ways.

- Discrimination still exists:

- “Even if you have good education it seems like if a white person and an Asian kid or a black kid goes and applies for the job, the perception is the white kid is going to get the job.” (Korean American man, SF)
- “I've actually seen it from both sides. When I went to college in Florida I was out in a bar one night and a couple of Afro-Americans came in and they wanted beer. They wanted it to go and they wanted a glass at the bar. The lady said you can take it to go, but I'm not serving you at the bar...Then maybe 10 years later...we walked into a bar and it was an Afro-American bar and they wouldn't serve us...I've seen it from both sides.” (white man, NJ)

The color of one's skin should not matter.

- "I'm really okay with the cream rising to the top no matter what color the cream is." (Chinese American man, NJ)
- "It's how talented are the people who are in your group and who are working for you? Not what color they are, not what their religious background is, but what is their ability?" (white woman, NJ)
- "I don't want to get sidetracked by making the focus on Asians, Latinos and African Americans because the system does need to be fixed." (white man, MD)

When skin color does matter, it is more likely to be seen as providing an advantage to minorities.

- "I work in a seasonal job...and they hired this one gal and she does not -- she got by with murder because she was black." (white woman, MN)
- "My company...they count how many blacks they promote. If they promote more black people, they got credit doing that." (Chinese American woman)
- "I almost think it's like reverse discrimination though...It happened to my cousin when he applied to medical school. They took so many of the minorities that there was no room for him. He was a better student than some of them." (white woman, NM)
- "I think the minorities can get better college education than a white student. I know for a fact. I've seen it happen." (white woman, NJ)
- "And get free healthcare." (white woman, NJ)
- "As long as they're not giving these people real preferential treatment that would eliminate some other person's opportunity to experience the same thing, I wouldn't have a problem with it. But if all of a sudden somebody who has the qualifications now has to give up a position for this person to take advantage of this, then I guess it would bother me." (white man, MN)

However, racism still lurks below the surface

- "I have a friend that is a police man and he told me that 90 percent of your crimes comes out of the black neighborhoods." (white woman, Nashville)
- "It's frustrating for me when I'm driving down the street and I see signs that are in Spanish or in Korean or whatever....It makes me feel like I'm going to have to go and learn." (white woman, Nashville)
- "As long as they're not giving these people real preferential treatment that would eliminate some other person's opportunity to experience the same thing, I wouldn't have a problem with it. But if all of a sudden somebody who has the qualifications now has to give up a position for this person to take advantage of this, then I guess it would bother me." (white man, Minneapolis)

If there are disparities, it is not due to race.

■ It's economic status

- "It's more about your status now, economic status. I think the lines are getting blurred. If you don't have that money, you just don't got the healthcare. If you have the money, oh the doctor is going to take you because he don't have as many patients anyway because nobody can afford to go in some of those smaller towns." (African American man)
- "It is less to do with minorities, per se, than lower class society now and income class, basically." (Korean American man)
- "Even sometimes a white person might not be able to go to college. That's why a lot of them go to the Army or Navy because they cannot just afford to go to college." (Chinese American woman)
- "If you go for a loan and you're going for a \$2 million house and you can only afford \$100,000, they are not going to approve you. So what do you say? You are being discriminated against because of your ethnic background?" (NJ woman)

If there are disparities, it is not due to race.

It's lack of information

- "Maybe because of lack of education, they don't feel comfortable going to the city council and asking for things." (white man, MN)
- "How are those neighborhoods represented and how are those needs brought to the table? Are they ever brought to the table? You don't have the culture there that is educated enough to say you know what? We should have a ball field. Why don't we? And get this ground swell going and then you have a spokesperson. That spokesperson goes to the community leader who goes to the mayor or whatever the channel is and then you have somebody making a proposal." (white woman, MN)

If there are disparities, it is not due to race.

■ It's responsibility and values

- "I think sometimes we hold each other down, whether it's jealousy or whatever. You need to stop stepping on our own people and start lifting ourselves up." (Latina, CA)
- "You know what comes to mind when I read this? Two words. Bill Cosby. If you ever read the hot water he got himself into but he didn't care a bit, was personal responsibility. Everybody at some point has to realize that they are responsible for themselves." (white woman, MD)
- "I feel that it is back to us. It's our responsibility...We're not doing what we need to do, and until we take responsibility and make the politicians do what we want them to do rather than to give them no direction, we're not going to change. I'm not going to wait for them to come and change things in our community. We're going to change it and we're going to make them help us." (African American woman, CA)
- "So it's not just your environment, but it's what you do with it after you get it. What you've been educated to do, who you met, who you know. Do you know where to go? Don't just stay in your community to get things and wait for things to come to your community to lift you up. You've got to go outside of your community a lot of times and bring things back." (African American man, MD)

If there are disparities, it is not due to race.

- It's hard work

- "Latinos are disproportionately likely to work in low wage jobs. But they're loving it. They're coming here just to get those low wage jobs so they can hopefully educate their children and their children will do better than they are doing right now. But they're working low wage jobs and happy to be here, so let's not knock America so much. The Latinos are happy to be here...They want to give their kids a better opportunity." (white man, MD)

Racism is seen as embedded in individuals, not institutions.

- "I really strongly believe that children are not born to discriminate to anybody when they are one, two, three. They include everybody. They don't care what color you are. But it is the environment that makes it change to say 'I'm not going to play with you because you are a different color than me. But I was told to stay away from you...' It's going to be passed along to the children." (Chinese American woman, NJ)
- "I think a big piece for me is that the differences are respected and valued, used as strengths... When I'm in my safe little classroom, that is something that we really make sure is covered and all the kids are taught that when they're five, that we take care of each other. It doesn't matter what holidays you are celebrating or what religion you are, what color your skin is that we are all part of the same group. I feel when I'm outside of school that as adults we don't necessarily always abide by that." (white woman, NJ)
- "I don't how you can stop racial profiling. I think it's something that has to come from within the police officers, the people that are doing it, not necessarily something that we're telling them you can't do it. Because if that's how you feel inside, then you're not going to be able to stop it no matter what." (white woman, NJ)

They struggle with an appropriate role for government in solving this problem.

■ Handouts for the undeserving?

- "Where my kids go to private school. It was a private school and there were a lot of kids that I'm not sure but I think they were probably from the inner city some of them. They gave them scholarships, full. They were allowed to live, room and board at the school because they couldn't get back and forth to their homes. Their books were free. If there were any trips that the kids would pay to go on, they were given it free and my kids would come home and say they don't even try. They don't even want to learn. They don't read the books; they don't do the assignments. They don't care." (MD woman, mixed group)
- "My dad made us work for what we wanted and then you appreciate it. I don't want to give them anything. I don't care what color they are. I could care less. If they work and earn their way, what's the difference...I'm a firm believer in unearned is unappreciated." (MN man)
- "Maybe the hands have been out so long they just need somebody to put it there all the time." (Chinese American man)

Changing the Conversation: Reframing Race

Four Models

1. Blocked Opportunities – Structural Racism
2. Racial Disparities as an early warning system – Miner's Canary
3. Diversity as Strength – the Michigan case
4. Race as a descriptor, not as a central causal agent – Solutions First

We all have a stake in making sure that every American has good quality health care because when a significant number of the population is without healthcare, it puts the whole system in jeopardy. Ironically, the more people that are thrown out of the health care system, the less stable it becomes. With fewer people to shoulder the burden of costs that are built into the system – from hospital infrastructure to doctor and nursing salaries – those costs escalate as the support system shrinks. When everyone is in the system, we can do a better job of preventing costly illnesses and spread the costs across a wider pool of people.

California is a good example of what can happen when the system is unstable. In California one of every three residents is Latino. Latinos are disproportionately likely to work in low wage jobs that do not offer insurance, resulting in more than one in four Latinos being without regular health care. But the problem extends beyond insurance. Health care services are less available in minority communities --- like dentists, for example, who are in short supply nationally. And recent budget decisions in California cut health care services to these groups that will further impair their ability to access health and human service programs that their taxes support.

Latinos are disproportionately underrepresented in the state legislature, so their concerns are frequently ignored. "Too many state representatives think their constituents' needs are in competition with Latinos' needs," stated Representative Arturo Gonzalez. "They fight to weaken requirements for business to provide insurance, cut Medicaid funding, and close clinics, not realizing these actions hurt their constituents as much as mine. Without a regular source of healthcare people rely on emergency rooms or go without care, which makes communities less healthy, costs more in the long run, and weakens the entire healthcare system. As we work toward reforming health care, we need to keep in mind that the challenges facing minorities' health affect everyone's well-being."

As the healthcare crisis in California worsens, the question becomes whether or not the state can set aside narrow self-interest, and work toward the needs of the state as a whole.

The nation's economic landscape has shifted over the past 30 years. Low-paying service jobs with no benefits have replaced manufacturing jobs with good pay and benefits. To understand what is likely to occur in the future economy, one only need look at the most vulnerable populations in our society.

Historically, minorities and immigrants are the first to be hit in an economic downturn, and the last to recover. What happens to minorities and immigrants can serve as an early warning system for the economy overall. And the warning lights that are going off in this current economy should give the nation cause to worry.

The percentage of minorities employed in low wage service jobs has increased steadily over the past two decades while their per capita income has declined precipitously. Five years ago Robert Chen had a good-paying job as an electrical engineer. Now, he takes temp jobs during the day and waits tables at night. "I worry all the time," he says. "I worry about paying the bills, about not having health insurance for my family, and about whether or not the public school district in the city is capable of giving my kids a good enough education to prepare them for the future. I keep sending out resumes, but it feels like all the jobs are gone." Now the same trend is appearing among the white middle class, which is relying increasingly upon service sector jobs to pay the bills.

Miner's Canary – mixed bag

- Health care vignette not effective because of the subject matter

"Whether it's Latinos or Caucasians, African-Americans, anything you think of, it's not good quality healthcare,"
(white man, NM)

- "Rungs" vignette more promising

"When you outsource things and take it out of the country or even out of the state of California, the jobs remaining primarily are those low paying, low sector service jobs,"
(Latina, Los Angeles)

"I think nobody can really feel safe in a job any more. You really don't know if you are going to have benefits tomorrow or if they're going to send out your work to somebody overseas,"

(white woman, TN)

State governments across the nation are eyeing a five-year-old (San Francisco wording: *Kentucky*; all others: *Illinois*) initiative that is re-shaping opportunity in the state. A number of urban and rural communities (All but San Francisco heard: *from Chicago to the farm towns of Southern Illinois*) were experiencing rising crime, declining school test scores, and disappearing economies. Faced with this situation, state legislators knew that dramatic action was needed to keep the state from dividing along class and race lines.

“We are the product of our environment,” stated Mayor Cyrus Blackwell. “For most of us, the forces that provide opportunity or raise barriers blend into the background of our lives: the ability to attend a quality school, walk safe streets, pay for college, or get a loan to buy a home or start a business. We take these opportunities for granted. In many communities, however, these opportunities are hard to find, making success in life more difficult.”

In the 1990s economic analysts began to notice growing disparities across the state. “Business incentives were concentrated in white, wealthy suburbs,” stated economist Jean Harrison. “That drew resources away from low-income rural and urban areas and created a number of impoverished communities. These communities became increasingly likely to have failing schools, unsafe streets, and little economic opportunity. Try to start a business in these communities, and you’d find few banks willing to provide a loan. Talk to a bright kid who gets good grades, and you’d discover that her parents can’t afford to send her to college.”

To address the growing disparities, the state worked with citizens to create a development plan for their community, replicating the process with citizens in 30 communities around the state. Citizens provided the energy and vision while the state provided technical assistance and \$100,000 grants to help communities get started implementing their common vision. One inner city community used a portion of the grant to provide low-interest business loans to residents. A rural community used a portion of the grant to attract a child care center to the area.

The Governor is committed to the program and officials in other states are watching closely to see if it will be successful and able to be replicated in other states.

Solutions First – Optimistic, Local Initiatives

"It's trying to attract the businesses back to help raise the test scores and bring people back and reduce the crime level. The crime will be reduced because more jobs will be available for the people who live in the community. The test scores would go up because the schools will attract better students or families of students who have a vested interest in the community. And if your parents are working and if they have a meaningful job, the kids will see that and see that there is an interest in school and that school will take me to the next place and that place will probably be college or a good job, or college which will lead to a good job."
(white man, Los Angeles)

Some Important Preliminary Conclusions

- No one wants to talk about race
- If forced to talk about inequities, class is a more comfortable conversation, but may not get you any further
- Racial stereotypes are rampant
- Race is perceived by many as deviation from fundamental American values, especially self-determination
- External conditions are shut out by the frame of individualism, while effort is made central
- Whites do not see white advantage nor continuing discrimination
- Unequal advantage by minorities is the new red herring
- No solutions to admitted problems in system, except to let them work themselves out "naturally"
- Current practice (historical victories, exemplary successes, personal episodes) do not advance the cause